

Town of



AMHERST

Massachusetts

TOWN HALL
4 BOLTWOOD AVENUE
AMHERST, MA 01002

SELECT BOARD
Phone (413) 259-3001
FAX (413) 259-2405
Email: selectboard@amherstma.gov

March 23, 2009

President Barack Obama
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

We are writing to ask you to support HR 676, a single-payer health care bill for the Nation and to use your leadership to help move it through Congress. This bill would provide high-quality health care for all; and, according to experts, it would save the U.S. \$350 billion a year, thereby helping reduce the deficit while providing greater health care benefits.

Towns such as ours have found that health care costs for town employees are crippling budgets. In Amherst, Massachusetts between 2000 and 2006, health care costs rose 132%, greatly exceeding the 20% increase in property tax revenue. This has meant difficult cuts to services as we try to balance our budget.

The cost of Massachusetts' health care reform (a putative model for the country) for FY 2009 is projected to be over \$1.3 billion. This is double the amount that was predicted two years ago and is the highest per capita spending on health care in the world. We must move to a better quality, more cost-effective National health plan, an expanded and improved Medicare. Citizens in Massachusetts voted overwhelmingly for a single-payer system in all ten districts where it was on the ballot as a non-binding referendum in November 2008.

No plan based on private insurance can improve our health care system, which is falling further behind other nations. Our rankings for life expectancy have fallen to 49th and to 44th in infant mortality, according to the *CIA World Fact Book*. Private health insurance is a profit-driven industry that increases profit by denying care. Health insurance in Massachusetts is considered acceptable by the State agency that oversees health care reform even if it does not cover cancer or pregnancy.



Another outcome of the insurance industry running health care is that people are driven to bankruptcy even when they have health insurance. Elizabeth Warren, part of your TARP oversight team, studied bankruptcy and found that almost half of personal bankruptcies were caused by medical bills and three-quarters of those individuals had health insurance.

Also, medical problems are the cause of 49% of housing foreclosures and 14,000 people a day are losing their health insurance in the current economic crisis. Lastly, businesses are hurting. Imagine how much more competitive GM would be if \$1500 for the health care costs of employees did not have to be added to the price of each car.

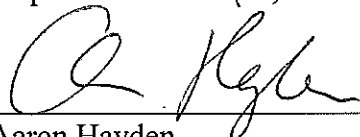
A single-payer system would provide excellent health care for all of our residents and be cost effective. It would also be a boon for businesses and unions, municipalities, states and the nation, thereby improving our economy.

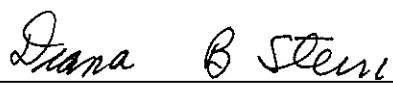
We, the Select Board of Amherst, urge your support for HR 676.

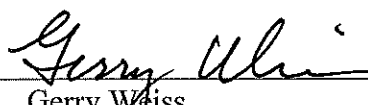
Sincerely,


Stephanie J. O'Keeffe, Chair


Alisa Brewer


Aaron Hayden


Diana B. Stein


Gerry Weiss